



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: CAMEL

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW NAME FOR THE CAMEL?

- It's *gamal*, from the root letters גמל.
- The shorash or root meanings of the word are to deal fully or adequately with, wean, or ripen.
- The original meaning was probably to complete or perfect something.

MAYBE CAMELS WERE GIVEN THAT NAME BECAUSE THEY'VE BEEN SO USEFUL TO PEOPLE, HELPING THEM TO COMPLETE OR PERFECT SO MANY THINGS.

- Who can teach us some of the ways camels are useful to people?
 1. They carry freight and people over long distances.
 2. Their hair is made into wool for clothing.
 3. Their hair is also used to make tents, saddle bags, and sandals.
- Their urine is used to make sal-ammonia and their dung is used for fuel.
- Did you know that they can sense when a sandstorm is coming and will hurry their pace to reach a protected place.
- Their milk and meat are edible.

BUT ARE CAMELS KOSHER?

- Hint: they chew the cud and have a split hoof.
- But they're *not* kosher because they have a cushion that covers the foot and hides the hoof.

CAN SOMEONE TEACH US THE TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF CAMEL ARE.

- Arabian and Bactrian.
- What are the most obvious difference between them? (Arabian camel has one hump, Bactrian camel has two humps.)

IT'S TIME FOR THE CAMEL QUIZ!

- How many miles can a loaded camel cover in a day? (Arabians, 100 miles; Bactrians, 30 miles.)
- How long can a camel travel without drinking water? (Eight to ten days.)
- How can the camel travel so long without water? (It has a special reservoir stomach for carrying water, which it can compress and thereby force the water into its upper stomach.)
- How much weight can it carry? (Nearly a half-ton.)

- How can the camel walk on the hot desert sand? (It's feet are covered with a tough, sponge-like material that insulates them.)

THE MIDRASH TELLS US THAT A CAMEL TOOK THE PROPHET HOSEA TO HIS FINAL RESTING PLACE.

- Can anyone teach us what a prophet is?
- Before he died in Babylon he had asked that after his death his body be loaded on a camel and the animal be allowed to find its own way.
- At whatever point the animal stopped, he was to be buried.
- After he died, his body was put on a camel, and the animal made the dangerous trip to Palestine.
- It found its way to Safed where, coming upon the Jewish cemetery, it stopped and stood still—which was where Hosea was buried.

AND A CAMEL WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN CHOOSING THE BURIAL PLACE OF MAIMONIDES, THE GREAT RABBI OF HIS AGE WHO LIVED IN THE 12TH CENTURY?

- He lived and died in Egypt but he was to be buried in the Holy Land.
- His body was put on a camel and carried to Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel.
- When the camel reached Tiberias it refused to go any farther—so Maimonides was buried in a plot of ground chosen by a camel.
- But as it turned out it was close to the burial place of the great Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, who was the greatest sage of the first century.
- Who knows what a sage is? (One who is recognized and respected for great wisdom and judgment.)

THE TALMUD HAS A PROVERB ABOUT CAMELS (Yevamot 45a).

- Who can teach us what a “proverb” is? (A short saying that expresses a basic truth.)
- The proverb is that, “. . . a camel can dance on a bushel basket.”
- Does anyone know what this is to teach us? (Much more is possible than we can imagine.)



Gather the People

<http://www.gatherthepeople.org>

© 2003 Moshe ben Asher & Khulda bat Sarah